

THE ENGLISH KITCHEN.

BY PROFESSOR JOHN SANDERSON, AUTHOR OF THE "AMERICAN IN PARIS," ETC.

LET no one presume to judge the kitchen of any country, who has not seen it in its several seasons. I came happily to England, the sign being in the bull, and stayed an entire revolution of the year. I therefore speak of my personal knowledge, and not upon hearsay or equivocal authority.

April.—It is the opening month—the month of hopes, of the anticipation of future dishes, better often than the dishes themselves. The fresh gardens now lift up their bosoms to the genial sun, seeds expand, leaves germinate, the little and pouting gooseberry is "just signified," and the tender asparagus, (talk of maternal tenderness!) and sprouts, and all the children of the chaste dews, cauliflower and crisp lettuce, peep out from their winter's coverlets. Not so many waves rush towards the shores of Norwegia, or so many autumnal leaves fill the valleys of Allegheny, or April fools London. A spur too is given to the animal fluids. The saccharine, oily and albuminous, are blended richly in the Englishman's cheek, and he begins—gastronomically speaking—a new life in April.

But the cold season in this month often rallies, and Flora unbuttons her jacket yet timidly, and exposes her tender buds. The year's first fruits just stand at the door of life, fearing to trust their infant leaves till May and June; then out they come, breathing their little souls upon the spring. Then hand in hand come the young pigeons with the young peas, their natural sauce, and fresh mackerel. Need I make your panegyric, delicious peas! so condescendingly accommodating yourselves to flesh and fish. The snipe, too, presents his long bill in these months, and shares fitly the peas with the bird of Venus. The Epping butter is all of gold, and milk of a better flavour. It is now that the belle and exquisite, dieting on the snowy beverage and refreshing vegetable, bring back the natural tinge to the cheek, and the attenuated roué works off the "lees and settlings" of his acidulous blood from the dissipations of the winter. Spring chickens and capons grace the nones of June; and deserts of red fruits—the coy strawberry, piled into elegant and ruby pyramids, and cherries, which "the dropping tree bedeweth" like tears upon a rosy cheek. The protestant English have advantages at this season enough to make a Frenchman change his religion even in Catholic communities; in which, to produce a meal that may provoke the sensuality of the gourmand, languid from the indulgence of the carnival, requires all the resources of art. The touchstone of genius is a soup maigre.

July.—A good dinner in July is itself a reputation, so meagre its contributions; and still worse

the first days of August. The author of the *Almanach des Gourmands* is astonished, and I also, that Julius and Augustus Cæsar, both notable gourmands, should have consented to stand god-fathers to these two detestable months. Meats of the butchery are of no repute. For six tedious weeks the stew-pan reposes, mouth down, (and "down in the mouth,") upon its shelf; and the gridiron hangs silent upon its nail, as David's harp upon the willows of Babylon. Game, too, is safe under the just laws. Juno Lucina, spare the little rabbits! The very hare now grows into courage, and braves the terrier to his beard; and the part-ridge cares not a whistle for the huntsman. When a gun explodes, he just puts out his head from the copse, his little toe upon his bill, listens awhile, then sings *bob-white!* Except always from the general poverty that great consolation of all seasons, the turkey. Like other bipeds *a la barbe* in England, the gobbler always is exquisite, always fashionable. They do not seem to be aware—the English—when they send over their Mistress Trollopes and all the Boz's to abuse us, of the obligations in which they are indebted to us for this noble bird—the largest and most savoury of the domestic fowls—to say nothing of potatoes, and nothing of the cinchona bark carried over by the Jesuits. And a few other tiny consolations may be noticed as the blessings of this month;—its salads, its apricots; beans too—beans, the pet vegetable of every age and country. Cicero, Fabius, Lentulus, and I know not how many other distinguished Roman families, are called from it—being served in shells, or in their *puris naturalibus*, grace its tables, which towards the end are perfumed with the flavorful melon and canteleup; and the peach, at length, with its rosy and velvety cheek, invites the lip. And the luxurious Englishman now and then consoles himself for the season's barrenness with a sucking pig. At the cruelty and impolicy of this last dish, the French gourmets affect to be much scandalized. "What will you answer," exclaims the author of the Almanach, "when she accuses you with her cries, to the interesting mother (the pig's mother)? Does not your own interest, blind that you are, plead for it; for its youth; for its innocence? This little pig, so barbarously impaled, stuffed with sage, and crowned with parsley; grown up—would it not have been the respectable mother of future pigs; would it not have given you, improvident! two hams, a chine, lard for frying-pan and lamp, pig's feet, and for sausages and puddings its entrails, its very blood! And who," he adds, "has given its splendid fame to Bologna, to Bay-

onne, and Washington's native commonwealth? Who, moreover, to Rembrandt's and Raffaele's immortal talents, and others of the brush? Pigs!" The share which these illuminati, the pigs, have had in enlightening Cincinnati and other western cities, and the recent brilliant victory of lard over spermaceti, must of course be superadded to this pathetic appeal of the Almanach.

For my humble self, I do not conceive that the English nation is rashly to be accused, for this spitting of little pigs, of cruelty. The old receipt, it is true, was objectionable: "Take a living pig, make it swallow a portion of vinegar and water, and rosemary and thyme, sweet basil, bay leaves and sage, then immediately whip it to death and roast it forthwith." One wonders how Mrs. Glass, herself a mother of family, could have written down this recipe. But such barbarism, I am happy to say, is now totally obsolete, and that pigs are everywhere treated with exemplary humanity throughout Great Britain—with a humanity, indeed, which sometimes borders on tenderness. Mr. Dickens, the traveller, acknowledges his weakness in this respect, and has devoted several pages of his American book exclusively to the pigs, and throughout his entire tour, especially *sou-west*, has not missed an opportunity of noticing with honour this distinguished quadruped. It is true his partialities may have been influenced in this instance by observing (for he is a close observer of this kind of life) that pigs, though much subject to being spitted, do not spit—a practice to which he has so violent a repugnance; and although their way of biting one another's tails off might indicate a certain fondness for "pig-tail," that they do not chew tobacco.* Mr. Charles Lamb, also, notwithstanding the mutton affinities of his name, stands up for little pigs—when roasted. "A pig," he says, "is one of those things I could never think of giving away. Any thing else, ducks, geese, Welsh mutton, I could impart to my friends; but—pigs are pigs. The skin so crisp, tawny and crackling,—lives in Mivart's memory; and the fat—it is not fat, he exclaims, but the blossoming of fat—fat cropped in the bud;—it is fat in its primitive innocence. Alas! that such buds should blow out even into the maturity of rank bacon." He is nice and particular about its age. It must be under a moon old, guiltless as yet of the sty; voice not yet broken—something between a treble and grumble, the prelude of a grunt; a squeak, I presume, upon B sharp. In a word, it must be a suckling in its milkiest tenderness, not yet approaching "the grossness and indolence which too often attends maturer swinehood." I partook often, while in London, of this favourite;

* Mr. Dickens, describing Western manners, represents the pigs as being of quite a joyous turn of mind, "brisk as lamp-lighters;" but excessively rough, hirsute, and ill-bred in their social intercourse;—one of the many causes, no doubt, which have led him to judge so unfavourably of our republican form of government. He saw a pig, with his own eyes, pursue another, and without the smallest provocation, bite off its tail. (See "American Notes.")

and calling to mind the fine pomegranate complexion of its skin, its delicious aroma and ambrosial perfume, it would be ingratitude to the giver of all good flavours, were I to close this paragraph without adding to that of the elegant author of *Elia* and the *Pickwick*, my own small tribute to this unquestionable merit of the English kitchen, the sucking pigs.

July approaching, the luxurious Londoner, carrying with him stores of ladies and wines, at which Father Matthew's teetotalism would totally relent leaves the steamy atmosphere of the metropolis for his country seat, and there escapes the dog-star, and waits, patiently as he can, the coming of the chase, setting out often, when the light breezes cool the grove, his dessert under the sun-proof pines upon the lawn. In the meanwhile, to keep his hand in, he carries about his gun in his rambles among the fields and forests, and now and then picks up the outlawed weazel, or hawk, or owl, or polecat; or if nothing else, he will shoot tom-tits on the hearths and commons, till the Twelfth of August—the glorious Twelfth of August! Then the unnatural propensities, inveterate in English blood, as the pent up steam with the more violence, from long and laborious suppression, burst out. Cease, Grisi, Rubini, your warbling; and Ole Bull, your fiddling. The crack of the whip, yelping of hounds, detonation of fowling-pieces, are the music of the island. The huntsman now wades the swamp the live-long day, and tired and bedrabbled, and laden with grouse late in the evening, revisits his shed; his dogs lank and long, their bellies tied to their back bones, standing about the door, tails and heads hanging, and all their mighty canine passions quelled. Till the close of the following month, Diana shares the island with Minerva, and hares and rabbits, and quails and pheasants, and woodcock, and those native islanders, the snipe, and rail and grouse, load the tables of the land, and migratory ducks come from the ends of the earth to be barbecued at Mivart's and the London Tavern.

The Scottish Highlands now are alive. Hotels are running over with Englishmen, three in a bed, or higglety-pigglety they lie about the floors, rooms and gentlemen, or sleep away the easy hours upon chairs,—the same hand that closes the dying eyes of night unclosing the impatient huntsman's. Delicate squires, who capered or languished but yesterday at Almack's, now dressed out in shooting jackets and caps, pockets stuffed with powder and shot, and patent wadding, cover the plain. You would think it had rained men, as it rains frogs at Birmingham. And the dog stands by, with ears pendant, and now and then a whine, awaiting the signal; or receives the caress of his master, and climbs his knees, the envied kiss to share. Mr. Burke and others ascribe to these shooting propensities of the English, the beautiful balance of the constitution, and maintenance of country interests against the ascendancy of the capital. What are they doing, this whole community of lords and squires under arms? They are shooting snipes for the liberties of

England. Of what avail the great charter, the glorious Revolution, but for these shooters of rabbits? But for these Nimrods, I pray you, of what avail the makers of ramrods?

The fisherman, too, in this month, draws his seine, or sits with line and tackle on the tail of his boat, or rows his finny treasure towards the Hungerford stairs; or upon a rock that thrusts out its neck over the stream, inveigles the sly trout, or floating on the crystal waters of the Leith or Shannon, watches with his harpoon. In the fish stalls over the whole face of London, the stately salmon now are seen, lying socially at the side of each other upon marble slabs, as the dead people at the Morgue; and the Hungerford especially, and Billingsgate, with their salmon, turbot, barbel, trout, sole, perch, carp, pike, eels, lobsters, crabs, present a touching spectacle to the eye of the gourmand.

That prince of geniuses, M. Savarin, in his *Physiologie du gout*, dispenses me from making the eulogy of fish; and numerous other authorities. Of these, I will cite one only, the Cardinal Fesch, as religious and gastronomical a prince as modern times have any example, who held fish to be the choicest portion of a dinner. Having one day a present of two turbot of unusual size, he wished, at a sumptuous feast in preparation, to make a display of both, which in strict table etiquette is not allowed. He consulted, however, his maitre d'hotel. The maitre replied, after some reflection, "They shall both appear, and with honour to your eminence." The one was accordingly brought in. (Great sensation!) But in its removal to the side table, crack! the turbot and waiter came down upon the marble floor. There was a general exclamation. A gloom then came over the assembly, and finally a deep silence; when the maitre, turning coolly to the attendants, said, "Let another be brought in." I leave to your imagination the surprise of the guests. "In the great deluge, which destroyed every thing else," says the author above cited, "fish were spared; not only spared, but so mournful a dispensation to other animals must have been to them a holiday enjoyment—which special immunity, he thinks, should of itself recommend fish to our profound and unqualified respect."

It is now September, and oysters claim the protection of the eighteenth letter of the alphabet; yet they who have most wit advise a delay until October. English oysters, be it said without offence to the republic, are not a whit inferior to our best. They are of a large size and a small, and the latter being superior in flavour, are therefore called emphatically "natives." Miss Quin of Haymarket will scollop you the larger in elegant shells, and the natives she will serve you in their own juices. Or Miss Quin, if she chooses, will marry you and bring you a marriage portion of £10,000. What an eulogy herself of English oysters is Miss Quin! And the solid turkey now graces the market in its best and greatest abundance, with its glorious sauce by its side, the fresh truffle. I must say a word

particularly of the truffle—"the greatest blessing," says the Almanach, "that Providence in its infinite goodness has conferred," &c. Nicolo, in eating a truffled pie, always put his hand before his eyes to avoid distraction; and, he used to say, nothing gave so delicious a perfume to a dish as a benevolent host, except truffles. Their perfume is of a nature so subtle and exhales so copiously, that the smallest quantity communicates a pleasant aroma to a dish, but their virtue is freshness, lost almost with their separation from the earth. The truffle is found rarely, and its quantity is limited as that of gems and the precious metals. It is the diamond of gastronomy. Its Potosi is Perigord; its Christopher Columbus, a pig. It is born, it grows to maturity, it remains within the earth till the genius of the pig—"in this friends of mankind"—discovers it, and brings it into human uses. It is known to make women more affectionate, and men more amiable. Why has it not been discovered before now in America? It is hardly probable that nature should have made turkeys in one continent, and placed their sauce at three thousand miles distant in another.*

If you would imagine something the most savoury and appetizing at this season, it is the Epping butter. The Londoners consume of it 40,000 lbs. daily. Milk, too, is in its best flavour. But look to your dairy. There are milkwomen in London who never saw a cow. Of pure milk they buy a quart, and snails and cabbage leaves and the Thames are the complement of a gallon. The Duchess of Queensborough, after Madame Poppea of Rome, and Richelieu, the French duke, used to bathe her wrinkled beauties in astringent wine, and in the balmy and emollient milk—served afterwards at the dinners and tea-tables of London customers. The preserves now, and hot-houses and graperies, pour out their luscious treasures,—Chiswick and Chatsworth,—and the great vine at Wolsley's palace sends forth its annual tribute of a tun. The vintage, too, contributes its fresh nectar from Champagna and Burgundy, and Johannesburg and Oporto, such as Jove never quaffed or Houris dreamed of, to sleep and ripen in the London docks. To thee, who scattered the seeds upon the earth, Triptolemus; and to thee, Noah, who reared the vine, and Bacchus, who squeezed its juices into our cups, the grateful heart pours out its homage in November. The massive and heavy roast beef, and fragrant and more delicate steak, also are in their excellence; and the English mutton, it must be confessed, is at this season irreproachable. It is what the French call "magnifique." You meet it in infinite shapes at hotels and eating houses, always the central piece. Its most common form

* The truffle was known to the Romans, was lost in the dark ages, and restored contemporaneously with ancient letters; but in such small quantities, that it was scarce seen for a long time, says M. Savarin, but at the tables of great lords and kept mistresses. Indeed, it is only such great personages who can use it commonly at the present day. I priced a truffled turkey at a famous cookery of the Strand—it was £3 10.

is the joint rotund and rosy, and served cold; a little skewer of wood standing primly up, with the admonitory notice—"Gentlemen requested not to misscarve the joint." In the markets, you see every where appended to the favourite viand bills of the play and others—*Wolsey*, *Kean*; *Hamlet*, *Macready*; and Fanny Elssler's limbs in social pigeon-wing with the legs of mutton, sure of the widest circulation and broadest notoriety; and the stalls in which mutton is displayed at night, are bright with gas, outdoing the fashionable saloons. The sirloin, it is true, is of the order of knighthood, and "the roast" is the national dish. It has undergone a kind of gastronomical canonization, and encourages Englishmen to fight for their country; and the country itself is emblematically denominated "John Bull;" but the popular sentiment is nevertheless decidedly in favour of mutton. The vernacular term for an English gastronomical refectory is—what?—a *chophouse*. And if the South Downs are among the classical spots of the island—for what is it?—for the fat mutton they send up to London. Why, a leg of mutton is in some parts of England a branch of gentlemanly education, enjoined in the endowment of her colleges. At Eton, a requisite preparation for Oxford is mutton; and a student of the Inns eats his way through a series of mutton dinners to the woolsack. This appetency of the English for mutton is seen in the very idiom of their language. "Take your mutton with me," expresses by a pretty metonymy an invitation to the whole dinner. If any thing is good in a supereminent degree, it is called "first chop." If any one becomes the famous and eloquent leader of a great enterprise, he is called Mr. Bellwether. It is always panegyrical whatever relates to sheep. The Westminster judge composes his wigged gravity to the prim aspect of this animal; and of all the French pastorals, the Quarterly Review admires only Madame Deshouilliere's "*Petits Moutons*." If you should see, perchance, as I have, a genuine cockney stand up before a map of South America, his two hands in his breeches pockets, and his face kindling into a glow—it is not Pizarro's conquests, or gems of Potosi that he admires, or the "cinctured chief." He has mistaken it for a leg of mutton. A hot chop is an Englishman's morning meal; the cold joint at noon his lunch;—he dines on his mutton paté at six, and again blesses his midnight hour on mutton—reposing then on a downy couch, of woollen, of pictured shepherd girls, of battenning flocks, of legs of mutton, he dreams out the night; or finally, and not sorry for it, has a nightmare of mutton.

The sap now returns to the roots. Winter has descended upon the dismal London, and its dwellings, only dimly visible, are seen like ghosts of houses through the dense vapours. Clouds hang lifeless, or gusts of rain and winds howl through the chimneys and pelt the windows with a dull and pattering sleet. In this inclemency of the heavens, men require stronger stimulants and better tables. The social affections, too, grow naturally warmer,

and new friendships accrue. Appetite has its memory. Kindnesses cemented with a Bayonnese ham or Perigord pie, truffled, are difficultly forgotten. The Englishman now piles up the Newcastle higher upon his grate, and his heart (for Englishmen have hearts, though surly in disclosing it,) expands, and he brings out the choice brand Lafitte, or the old port, fuzzy and dusty from the innermost cellar, and fills the goblet of pleasure to the brim. A hundred iron tongues now proclaim the day from the belfries. Lords are merry at St. James's, beggars are "at home" at St. Giles's. It is the jubilee of stomachs. It is Christmas. A peep at the larder is a feast. Mince-pies exceed all arithmetic. Turkeys—as well count the stars!—and capons, and geese, and plum-puddings, and redolent and spicy little pigs, and all the women you would think in London were turned again into ribs, (spare-ribs.)

A fellow under Pompey the Great gained 60,000 sesterces, say the histories, by fattening peacocks, and many near London and Paris grow rich in the same way by their care of poultry, which has become a separate branch of rural economy, and is carried on by ingenious processes. Turkeys are put into dark places and crammed, as students at college, with a paste of barley meal, mutton suet, and some molasses mixed with milk, for a fortnight,—their eyes being stitched that the whole mind may be given undistracted to the process of fattening. Oortolans, that eat voraciously only at daylight, being put into a dark room, are cheated into fresh appetites every hour—imaginary mornings being introduced through the lattice; and geese used to be nailed upon a board through the feet and exposed to a hot fire, for the enlargement of their livers. This treatment, which was much censured for its cruelty, was made a subject of debate, as Mr. Lamb tells us, at St. Omer's; and it being considered that the pleasure imparted by a liver pie to rational beings, being so infinitely greater than the pain endured by the goose, it was its duty patiently to submit. However, the goose has profited by the growing sentiment against cruel and capital inflictions, and the roasting-alive process has been superseded by a gentler treatment.

The Parliament has met—it is February. All London has come to town, which is choked with visitors through its ten thousand streets. Every thing is racket, uproar, hubbub, and "delightful squeezing" at the routes. The entire three kingdoms,—I don't mean Ireland and the others, but air, earth and water,—are laid under contribution for its pleasures. The fair-haired English maids now flutter in quadrilles, or wave around the ball-room in the voluptuous waltz. Magnificent beauty encircles the opera. Rubini, Grisi, and the others, warble divinely. Elssler bounds with elastic limbs, and Cerito lights like a vapour upon the scene. Whetted by exercise and mirth, appetites are divine; the women especially—*sont d'une gourmandise adorable*; and pleasure leads you by the hand to the clubhouses, and to the tables of rich citizens

and millionaire lords, laden with their richest fruits and viands, through the three virgin months of the year.

Thus England, as we see, owes in a special

manner gratitude to Providence—it has sent her stores of provisions so far beyond the common lot. Who may have sent her cooks is another consideration.

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